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# REMINISCENCES OF GUNBOAT LIFE

IN THE

## MISSISSIPPI SQUADRON.

By E. J. HULING,

Late Acting Assistant Paymaster, United States Navy.

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## PRELIMINARY WORDS.

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THE following "Reminiscence" of fourteen months spent in a gunboat in the Mississippi squadron were compiled some years since, in the intervals of daily newspaper work, from letters written to members of my family. Since their preparation and first publication all those letters as well as my official papers and many relics have been burned, and in revising them for publication, to meet a demand from my family and friends for copies, I have had to depend entirely upon memory.

As a matter of record I give the following list and brief sketch of the officers of the United States Steamer *Huntress*, (known on the naval records as gunboat No. 58 of the Mississippi squadron,) which formed my home during my term of service :

The *Huntress* was a flat bottomed, stern wheel boat, built for the Cumberland river trade, and drew, when strengthened up for service with all her armament on board, some thirty inches of water. It was purchased at Cincinnati and fitted out in haste there after the disaster to the Red river expedition in the winter and spring of 1864.

Acting Master John S. Dennis, an old whaleship captain, a native of Pennsylvania, who had run away and went to sea from New Bedford, rising from cabin boy to captain, was in command until his death in the winter of 1865.

Acting Master Henry E. Bartlett, of Burlington, Iowa, was sent to take command after the death of Captain Dennis.

Acting Ensign James M. Flint, of Lexington, Missouri, was

executive officer. He entered the service as a landsman and having a good education and ability to command rose to his position rapidly,

Acting Ensign Frank Middleton was a sailor, a native of Syracuse in this state. He had just returned from a cruise and landed in Maine when the war broke out. Enlisting as a soldier he was found in the search for sailors in the ranks of the army of the Potomac, and sent west with an acting commission.

Acting Masters Mates Henry Z. Alphin, Benjamin F. Brumback and James R. Thomas, were all Kentuckians, and were detailed from the army of the Cumberland to serve in the navy.

Acting Assistant Surgeon Henry S. DeFord was from Easton, Pennsylvania.

Acting Assistant Paymaster Edmund J. Huling was appointed from New York.

The Engineers were John Cullen, acting chief, with Isaac Ackley and Johnson Crawford, assistants. They were all Ohio river men, brought from Cincinnati, although Crawford was born in the east.

The Mississippi Pilots who started out with the Huntress from Mound City in June, 1864, were Edward L. Fulkerson of St. Louis, and James Hanlan of Cincinnati. In 1865 Mr. Fulkerson was transferred to another boat and Edward Hyner was sent in his place.

M. M. Berry of Saratoga Springs was for a time in service as clerk of Lieutenant Commander John G. Mitchell, who commanded the division from Columbus, Kentucky, to Memphis, and made his headquarters on the Huntress.

Ferdinand Height of Saratoga Springs was paymaster's steward on board the Huntress.

E. J. HULING.

Saratoga Springs, May, 1881.



REMINISCENCES  
OF  
GUNBOAT LIFE ON THE MISSISSIPPI.


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CHAPTER I.

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*How I went, and where I entered the Service.—Mound City and Cairo, Illinois:—The rise and progress of the Squadron.—The Ram Fleet.—The Commanders of the Mississippi Squadron.*

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 ON the seventh day of June, 1864 (having previously been appointed an acting assistant paymaster, United States navy), I received an order directing me to report to Rear Admiral D. D. PORTER, commanding the Mississippi squadron, at Cairo, Illinois, without delay. In a few hours I was on my way to the metropolis, where a short time sufficed to sup-

ply a uniform and other articles of outfit supposed to be needed, and the evening of the next day after leaving home found me in the cars flying through New Jersey to Philadelphia, and so on toward Cairo. Missing a connection at Chicago, I was forced to remain there one day, which I spent in viewing that wonderful metropolis of the west, and on Saturday evening, the eleventh of the month, I landed in Cairo from the Illinois Central railroad cars, to find that Admiral PORTER'S headquarters were at Mound City, six miles up the Ohio river. A naval tug boat was just leaving the wharf at Cairo, and my uniform assured me a passage to Mound City thereon; so without delay I continued my journey.

MOUND CITY I found a small straggling village, mostly dependent upon the naval station for its support. Started by an association of capitalists as a rival of Cairo, large sums of money had been spent to make it a business center. A large brick storehouse had been built, and there was a marine railway, to hoist boats out of the river for repairs, etc.; but the speculation had been a failure until the breaking out of the rebellion. Cairo was a strategic point, necessary for the government to hold, and when the Mississippi squadron was organized it was found necessary to lease the marine railway at Mound City for the use of the squadron, and soon the large storehouse of the

company was taken for a military hospital. It was not a very inviting looking place at any time. A high levee had been built directly in front of the town, but it did not extend far enough to keep the water from setting back into the streets when the Ohio was at its highest stages, and in April, 1865, all the inhabitants had to keep boats for navigating the streets, except where planks were laid on the tops of boxes and barrels. Over one hundred boats were counted at one time near the gate of the navy yard, having been used by the workmen to reach their work. In returning from church one Sunday in July, 1865, I overheard a discussion among a group of navy engineers as to the future of the citizens of the place. It was conceded that hell would be no punishment, after residing any length of time in Mound City, and therefore that the wicked of the place would be remanded back, as the only adequate penalty of their offenses.

CAIRO, situated at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, stood for the portrait of "Eden," in DICKENS'S novel of "Martin Chuzzlewit." Its situation is one where business will naturally center, but millions of dollars have been spent in filling it up so as to be habitable. It is the southern terminus of the Illinois Central railroad, and all steamboats stop there to put off and take on freight and passengers. The war was a great benefit to the place, its situation

requiring its occupation by the union forces. Ohio levee, its principal street, contained several good business houses, and much was being done to improve the place during the time I knew it. Two steam pumps of large size were kept at work during the high water in the spring of 1865, to pump out the water that set back into the town from the two rivers, and a construction train was bringing in sand to fill it up. If the proprietors of the place continue to lay out their money liberally in improvements for a few years longer, they may secure its future prosperity.

A brief account of the commencement and growth of the Mississippi squadron may be interesting in this connection. Among the first points of interest which attracted attention at the opening of the rebellion was the Mississippi river. The rebels closed it against the navigation of the west, hoping thereby to detach the people of that section from the union. Captain RODGERS, of the navy, was early sent to take measures for organizing a flotilla, but the war department claimed to control all matters on inland rivers upon whose lines the armies would be continually operating, and so for several months the Mississippi squadron, although the vessels were commanded by naval officers, was subordinate to the army, and Captain RODGERS and his successor, Captain A. H. FOOTE, who assisted in the capture of Forts Henry, Donelson,

Island Number Ten, Fort Pillow and Memphis, were both subject to the orders of the commandant of the army. General FREMONT, while in command of the western department, had much to do with the building and equipment of several of the first vessels of the squadron. The iron clads Essex, Benton, Baron de Kalb, and others that distinguished themselves in the attack above noticed, were superintended by army and naval officers together. They were of the class afterward denominated "turtles," a very appropriate name, considering their shape and speed. They had a flat bottomed hull, suitable for the navigation of the Mississippi, with all above the water line covered with very heavy plates of iron, put on over a thick planking, with a slant about equal to what is known as the French roof of a house. The pilot house was the only projection, besides the smoke stacks, above the nearly flat roof, and there were two low stories under the roof, furnishing very close and uncomfortable quarters for the officers and crew. The guns on these decks were to be fired through port holes, covered with heavy iron doors. Afterward, that style of vessels being found very slow and difficult to handle in the swift current of the Mississippi, as well as uncomfortable for officers and crew, the plan of taking ordinary river boats and altering them over was adopted. The squadron in time came to number some seventy or eighty vessels,

distributed on the Mississippi and its tributaries, from St. Louis to below the Red river. The passenger boats on the Mississippi are built on a plan entirely different from those on the eastern rivers, being propelled by high pressure engines occupying, with the boilers, a large part of the main deck. This part of the vessel, when altered for a gunboat, was protected by heavy planking, and then covered with a single sheet of extra thick boiler plate iron, sufficient to protect against musketry. This class of vessels was nicknamed "tin clads." The main deck was occupied by the crew, who messed on deck and slept in hammocks slung from hooks in the deck timbers above. The magazine and store rooms, or lockers, as they were called, were in the hold, nearly below the water line. The officers' quarters were on the upper deck, used for passengers before the boat was purchased for the navy. The protection for these quarters was very slight, being nothing more than about half an inch of wood. A gallery or guard surrounded the officers' quarters, upon which doors opened from the state-rooms, and forward of them was what was known in the squadron as the quarter deck, where the officer of the watch was stationed. This quarter deck was surrounded by a kind of box covered with canvass about breast high, called the hammock nettings, in which all the sailors' hammocks were stored during the day.

Above the officers' quarters was the pilot house, sheathed with thick planking and covered with boiler iron. In action all the officers and crew were stationed below, excepting the pilots and the commander, with a single aid, who were in the pilot house. The majority of the "tin clads" were propelled by wheels at the stern, entirely exposed, and looking quite cumbersome. While the iron clads carried heavy rifled guns, the "tin clads" first sent out were mostly armed with two light rifled guns forward and twelve or twenty-four pound brass howitzers on the sides. The only effective guns were really the two bow guns, which would send shells from one to two miles, while the howitzers, making more noise and jar on board the boat, would send their shells but a short distance, comparatively. The "New Era," which took part in the defense of Fort Pillow, when attacked by FORREST, had very little ammunition, except for her howitzers, and most of her shells fell short, or did little execution. Had she been armed with the same kind of guns that the boat I served upon carried (thirty pound rifled Parrots, sending shells three miles), she could have aided materially in defending that fort, and perhaps have prevented the capture.

When the Mississippi squadron was reorganized under the full control of the navy, a naval brigade was arranged by Colonel ELLET, commissioned by the sec-

retary of war, which operated during the opening of the river, the boats being strengthened forward to use as rams. These rams took part in the capture of Memphis, and also in the first attack on Vicksburg; but after the death of the two Colonels ELLET (father and son), although retained in the service, they did very little duty. Colonel ELLET, the projector, alone could make them efficient.

The Mississippi squadron, organized as I have mentioned, performed much service while under command of Captain A. H. FOOTE, but the wound he received in the attack on Fort Henry compelled his retirement after the capture of Memphis, in June, 1862, and very little service was afterward done by the squadron until Rear Admiral DAVID D. PORTER was ordered to its command, with Captain A. M. PENNOCK as fleet captain. Admiral PORTER, with his flag ship, the "Black Hawk," took part in the siege and capture of Vicksburg, in 1863, and he also went up the Red river with General BANKS, in the spring of 1864. The boats engaged in the latter expedition suffered very much, and at the time of my joining the squadron there were several new boats just fitted out to make up for the recent losses incurred up Red river, and to enlarge and increase the efficiency of the squadron generally.

The principal duty of the vessels of the squadron, during the last year of the war, was to convoy trading



boats and packets, and patrol the river to prevent the crossing of rebel forces, and the smuggling of ammunition and supplies from one side of the river to the other. In order to accomplish this, all skiffs and canoes were broken up along both banks. The rebels had been so weakened on the river that they could not bring batteries to the banks to fire on the gunboats, but occasionally small parties of guerillas would hide behind wood piles and fire a volley at a passing boat, doing small damage. Once or twice, as at Randolph, Tennessee, they would lay in ambuscade, and when a packet was about landing, attempt to rush on board and capture it. In the case above mentioned, two army paymasters, who were passengers, lost their lives in defending the boat. In relating the services performed by the boat to which I was attached, I shall hereafter tell how we prevented the capture of another packet, at Tiptonville, Tennessee.

The squadron was divided into districts, in each of which vessels were constantly cruising, commanded by a division officer, and each vessel patrolled a certain portion of the district.

## CHAPTER II.

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*Some account of the Mississippi River from Cairo to Vicksburg, from personal observations.—Places on the East side.—West side of the river.—Island Number Ten.—Memphis to Vicksburg.—Vicksburg.*

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FOR fourteen months my home was on board the gunboat *Huntress*, and about twelve of those months were spent in cruising between Cairo, Illinois, and Memphis, Tennessee. During that time I had opportunities for observing the river under a great variety of conditions. When I first joined the *Huntress*, in June, 1864, the water was low, although not at its very lowest stage, which happened in August. Numerous sandbars were to be seen above water, and at one place near Ashport, on the Tennessee side, there was a steamboat high and dry some distance from the water, which got afloat again in

October or November, during the fall rise. The water usually commences coming up in the channel in September, and rises some ten or fifteen feet above its lowest stage, and then subsides, to rise again in the spring, when it fills its banks and overflows on the west side for long distances. At New Madrid, Missouri, in the summer of 1864, we had to climb a bank full thirty feet to reach the town; and in April, 1865, I walked from the forecastle of the boat, about one foot from the water line, direct to the bank. It was during a similar high stage of water, in April, 1862, that the union gunboats were enabled to run around Island Number Ten, through St. James bayou, a very insignificant appearing channel at ordinary stages of the river. At Osceola, Arkansas, the leading citizens informed me that the water set back into the country for nearly forty miles, so that a person could navigate that distance in a light skiff. Some attempts had been made to build levees at the lowest points along the banks, before the war, but they were of very little use in consequence of being incomplete. Congress, several years previous, had given all the "swamp lands" to the states, to encourage and aid them in building levees, but these lands—being some of the richest—fell into the hands of party favorites in many cases, for small compensation.

The banks of the Mississippi, from Cairo to Vicks-

burg, are of a rich sandy loam, entirely free from stones or rocks, and with every rise and fall of the water masses of this soil are washed away in places, and the channel and facilities for landing at various points are completely changed. Thus, at New Madrid, in June, 1864, the headquarters of the United States garrison were some four rods from the bank of the river, and in the following spring the headquarters' shanty had to be taken down and moved back, to keep it from falling into the river. A fort built by the rebels in 1861, about half a mile south of the landing, was nearly all washed away the last time I saw it, in June, 1865. The navigable channel of the river had changed during the previous year, coming down on the Tennessee side of Island Number Ten, instead of the Missouri side, as it had done for many years previous, and the water seemed to flow with great force against the banks at New Madrid, and then, taking a turn, rushed over to the other side, cutting into the banks there at about the same rate. Citizens told me that in the course of the past forty years the village of New Madrid had been all moved back more than the width of the river, and that where New Madrid, Missouri, once stood was a sandbar, in the state of Kentucky, overgrown with cotton wood. At Point Pleasant, about ten miles below, where steamboats landed only one or two years before, a

sandbar had formed which rendered it impossible for a steamboat to land, and even difficult to be approached in the lightest skiff.

This continual shifting of the channels and landmarks on the banks renders the duties of the steamboat pilots very arduous and difficult, as they have to be constantly on the watch in every direction, to see if the landmarks are the same as on the last previous trip, or if there is any difference in the appearance of the water, denoting a change in the navigable channel.

It is quite noticeable how few places there are along the river suitable for town sites. There is not a single good one on the west bank of the river between Cairo and Memphis, a distance of two hundred and forty miles, and but five on the east side, viz., Columbus and Hickman, Kentucky, and Fort Pillow, Fulton and Randolph, Tennessee. There are numerous points where landings are daily made by the packets at wood yards, plantations, etc., etc., but no other places than those named where towns can grow up and thrive, as they do on the Hudson and other rivers east.

COLUMBUS, Kentucky, the county seat of Hickman county, is situated nineteen miles below Cairo. A high bluff (known as the "First Chickasaw Bluff") runs in to the river above the village. This was seized by the rebels in 1861, and crowned by a fort, which, as the river takes one of its bends here, easily pre-

vented the passage of boats below. The village stands on a plain immediately below the bluff, and is only approached with ease by land, from a southerly direction. It must have been a place of considerable business before the war. There was a branch of the State bank of Kentucky, and the Mobile and Ohio railroad came to the river there. It did not have over one thousand inhabitants. In order to keep the river open, and to prevent annoyance from small rebel bands, the government was compelled, besides having a patrol of gunboats, to maintain military posts at various points. Columbus was one of the points thus garrisoned. Belmont, immediately opposite Columbus, famous as the place where General GRANT fought his first battle with the rebels, had no appearance of a village, and would never attract the least notice from passengers on the boats, unless their attention was specially called to it. General GRANT only went there to attack an open camp of the rebels, to create a diversion and attract attention from another enterprise; and the rebels supposed themselves fully protected by the fort across the river.

HICKMAN, Kentucky, sixteen miles below Columbus, is built on a bluff running nearly parallel with the river (the second Chickasaw bluff), and is a much more sightly place than Columbus. It was also the residence of some of the local aristocracy of the vicinity,

being the county seat of Fulton county. The Nashville, Chatanooga and St. Louis railroad came in here, before the rebellion. The court house, which stood on the top of the bluff in rear of the town, was not a very handsome building, but there were some very good churches in the place, and very pretty private residences, with good blocks of brick stores. It was not regularly garrisoned by the government, and so became subject to great annoyances from guerilla bands, who drove off many citizens, forcing them to live elsewhere. Several times they made plundering raids into the town, robbing and burning, it would almost seem from very wantonness. It contained about one thousand inhabitants.

FORT PILLOW, Tennessee, is one hundred and fifty miles below, Hickman, by the river, while it is probably not much over half that distance by land. It is near the head of the bluff of which Fulton is the foot. There was no settlement here before the war. The bluffs come in to the river and run parallel with it for about ten miles, nearly to the mouth of the Hatchie river. The river makes an immense bend above Fort Pillow, and the point was seized by the rebel general of that name, who built the fort and named it after himself. The landing was very inconvenient, and it cost much to maintain it when held by the government. After the recapture of the fort by General FORREST, in

April, 1864, and the massacre of the garrison, the place was abandoned as unnecessary for a garrison.

FULTON, Tennessee, near the foot of the bluffs, has a very convenient landing, and a good sized town will probably grow up there. Large quantities of cotton had been shipped there before the rebellion, and in 1864 and 1865 quite a number of bales were shipped. There was only a single dwelling, and a church and storehouse, when we first began landing there, but after the collapse of the rebellion, in the spring of 1865, a new storehouse was erected, and it was expected that a village would grow up soon. A young man interested in the place informed me that at one time it was thought Fulton might grow up to rival Memphis, but the latter being named as the terminus of the Memphis and Charleston railroad, went ahead. The Hatchie river, a long, shallow and sluggish stream, empties into the Mississippi a short distance below Fulton. On the south side of the Hatchie the rebels built a fort early in the war, which they named Fort Wright. Its situation was low, and not at all what would be considered commanding.

RANDOLPH, a short distance below the mouth of the Hatchie, seemed to have been quite a village before the war, as there were the remains of several houses about on the bluffs. The formation of the place is more like Hickman than Fulton or Columbus. There



is a bluff rising gradually from the river, forming a ridge a short distance back, which could easily be laid out into a village. At the south part of the bluffs the rebels had another earthwork or fort, named Fort Randolph, built early in the war, but not occupied very long, according to appearances. There was only a storehouse there during my acquaintance with it.

MEMPHIS was a fine city of twenty or twenty-five thousand inhabitants, situated on a bluff rising gradually from the river, running parallel with it. It is well laid out, and contains many fine blocks of stores and three or four large hotels. Several years before the war, while the south was all-powerful in the union, a navy yard was located there, where the Wolf and Loosahatchie rivers, streams of small consequence, empty into the Mississippi. Here large sums of public money were wasted for the benefit of the south, and then the yard was donated to the state of Tennessee or city of Memphis, as worthless and useless to the general government. The rebels took possession of the shops, etc., remaining, when they closed the Mississippi to the union, and made use of the articles there to fit out their gunboats that ran up to Island Number Ten and Columbus. When Memphis fell, the government took possession of the navy yard and found the workshops very convenient for many purposes during the war.

As to the other places laid down on the maps, on the east side of the river, a brief paragraph will suffice.

MERRIWEATHERS', opposite Island Number Ten, is merely a plantation landing. OBIONSVILLE I never heard of, but there was a landing fourteen miles from New Madrid, in Tennessee, named TIPTONVILLE, where there was a storehouse and straggling hamlet. Considerable cotton and corn were shipped from this point, a road coming in there from the back country, across a bridge over Reelfoot Lake. It was almost surrounded by water when the river was at its highest stage. HALE'S POINT is on an island at the mouth of the Obion river, down which cotton and tobacco are transported in flat-boats. At the highest stages of water the point is all overflowed, and a platform three or four feet high is necessary to keep the cotton and tobacco from being damaged. ASHPORT is a straggling settlement near the mouth of the Forked Deer river, and is overflowed by the Mississippi at high water. A map of the river locates a town named Randolph opposite Island Number Forty, but although we passed the place many times I never saw any signs of it.

Several places are laid down on the maps, apparently villages, on the west side of the river, but in reality I only saw two places that could be so recognized.

NEW MADRID, Missouri, situated at the head of the

great bend in the river, is one of the oldest towns in the west. It is seventy miles below Cairo, and was settled by the Spaniards during their occupancy of the Mississippi valley, and was quite a village in 1811, when the great earthquake did so much damage in that vicinity. It is the county seat of New Madrid county, and has a court house—not a very imposing building—several stores, but no church, and, as before stated, is nearly overflowed by the Mississippi river at its highest stages. The village is small, but was a place of considerable business. Most of the houses were located on a single street, running back from the river. There had been a female academy here before the war. The place was garrisoned after its capture from the rebels, in 1862.

OSCEOLA,\* Arkansas, the county seat of Mississippi county, one hundred and ten miles from New Madrid and eighty from Memphis, was quite a village, by all accounts, before the rebellion. The court house was

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\* It was at Osceola that a horrible outrage was reported to have been committed, at the opening of the rebellion. A. D. RICHARDSON, in his *Field, Dungeon and Escape*, says that he heard at Cairo, from a passenger who came up on the last boat before the river closed, that a union man was seen hanging by the heels there. I am inclined to disbelieve this story, although there were some hard customers in that vicinity, as I may relate hereafter.

destroyed by fire, and many of the houses were taken down and removed to Fort Pillow, below, on the other side, by the forces at the latter point, so that it made a very small show from the river when I was there. The water came in, and at its highest stages nearly overflowed the place.

Of the other places on the west side which have names on the map very little can be said. POINT PLEASANT, as already noticed, a short distance below New Madrid, although at one time quite a shipping point for cotton and corn, was not approachable by boat during my cruising. GUYOSO and CARRUTHERSVILLE would not be noticed by passengers on the boats. During the winter of 1864 and 1865 a Jew trader at New Madrid managed to have a company from the garrison at that place sent to Carruthersville, and they built a stockade, which they evacuated after a little time, and a company of "home guards" came in and held it, so that a quantity of corn was shipped from there, and the Jew sold some goods. Although we landed there several times, there did not appear to be many inhabitants in the vicinity. The site for a village was not so good as at New Madrid.

FLETCHER'S, DR. HARDIN'S, MCGAVVOCK'S, and CRAIGHEAD'S, set down on the maps, are only the names of owners of plantations at the points named.

There are numerous islands in the Mississippi, and

by some agreement between boatmen and others they are known by numbers, from Cairo to near Milliken's Bend, where we come to Island Number One Hundred and Two. Number one is a short distance below Cairo, number five opposite Columbus, number six opposite Hickman, while number ten is in a large bend of the river a short distance above New Madrid. It stands high out of the water, and commands the river for a long distance above. The river there first runs down below the line of the state of Kentucky, so that Island Number Ten lies in Tennessee, and then returning it leaves quite a township belonging to the state of Kentucky, bounded on three sides by the river, and on the south by Tennessee. This portion of Kentucky is known as Madrid Bend, or "The Bend," for short. From Island Number Ten to Tiptonville is only four miles across the neck of land, while it is thirty miles by the river. Island Number Ten was fortified by the rebels, and gave General POPE and Commodore FOOTE considerable trouble in turning it. After the union forces got below it, through St. James bayou, the rebels evacuated it and retreated by the way of Tiptonville, Tennessee. The island was garrisoned by the union troops until the spring of 1864, when it was found unnecessary to retain troops there, and it was evacuated. When I first visited it, in 1864, it was overgrown with rank vegetation. The earth-

works, soldiers' huts, etc., were standing, but rapidly going to decay.

In June, 1865, while at Mound City, waiting to be put out of commission, the *Huntress*, with other "tin clads," was ordered to proceed to Vicksburg, to aid in towing up some of the iron clads stationed below. We made the trip to Vicksburg as quickly as possible, but were detained there a few days for repairs to the boiler. Returning against the current with an iron clad in tow was rather slow work, but the opportunities for observation were rather limited, and I can sum up the result in a few words. So far as I could see, there was no point suitable for a town site on the east side of the river between Memphis and Vicksburg; while on the west side there are four very desirable points. The banks on both sides resembled very much the west bank between Cairo and Memphis, as noticed before, there being the same absence of stones or rocks. At the mouth of the St. Francis river was a small village, and Napoleon, at the mouth of the Arkansas river, was a point of some importance, but not very inviting in appearance. It had the reputation before the rebellion of being the very worst place on the Mississippi—a very headquarters for gamblers, thieves, murderers, and people of those classes. Helena, at the mouth of the White river, had a similar reputation, but it had a more inviting look from the river. Slave-

holders did not like to encourage settlements along the river much below Memphis, as they were apt to become the resorts of the idle and vicious. Many places where from three to four thousand bales of cotton were shipped during a season would have only a solitary storehouse in view. I did not land between Memphis and Vicksburg, except at Skipwith's landing, a point where some navy coal barges were stationed, and where we stopped a few hours to take on coal. There was no appearance of a settlement there.

During our stay at Vicksburg I made frequent visits on shore, and went out to the fortifications in the rear of the town. The city is built on a side hill ascending from the water, resembling Memphis in that respect in a slight degree. Instead of there being, however, a wide street open on the side next the river, like the "front row," for a long distance, at Memphis, the principal street here is built up on both sides, near and parallel with the river. The court house, situated near the top of the hill, is a beautiful and sightly building. On the side facing the river the hill is cut through for a street, and it was in the bank, entering from this street, that many of the caves were built by the inhabitants during the long siege. Where General GRANT held his famous talk with General PEMBERTON, and arranged for the surrender, was a short distance from the mine which was exploded at the

time of the assault. The tree which had marked the spot was carried away after the surrender for relics, and the soldiers took a marble monument from a yard in the city, put on it a suitable inscription, and set it to mark the spot. This was surrounded by an iron fence, and was, of course, the point of most interest. At the north of this was a cottage, built of wood, which was perforated by musket balls on all sides. It was situated within General GRANT'S lines, but was quite prominent and within reach of the musketry from the rebel lines. It could not have been a very desirable place of residence during those eventful months.

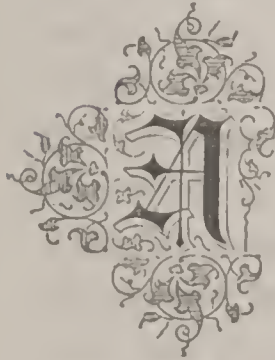


### CHAPTER III.

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*The Mississippi River from St. Louis to Cairo, with some account of the Boats navigating the Mississippi and its tributaries, and the dangers and difficulties to which they are subject.*

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AFTER the surrender of all the armies of the rebellion, the gunboats were ordered to Mound City to be dismantled and put out of commission. There was a large amount of ordnance and stores at Mound City which it was desirable to place in a more secure place than was to be found there, so several boats were loaded and sent to Jefferson barracks, where the government had land to spare for storage purposes. The Huntress made three trips, which gave me something of an opportunity to inspect the river and country adjacent on each side. I found considerable differ-

ence in the appearance of the river banks, particularly on the Missouri side, from that noticed below. There were rocky bluffs at Cape Girardeau, and quarries that will prove valuable as settlements increase below. Cape Girardeau is sometimes called the "Marble City," from its valuable quarries. There are several apparently good points for towns along the river bank, between St. Louis and Cairo, mostly, however, on the Missouri side. The Illinois shore is not entirely devoid of town sites, but the country along the river does not appear so well calculated for settlement as on the west side. There is the same difficulty in regard to the navigable channel of the river above that I have mentioned as occurring below Cairo. The channel of the river is subject to change by the forming of sandbars by the rise and fall of the water. Thus, at the time of our going up and down between Jefferson barracks and Cairo, it was altogether impossible for a steamboat to land at the beautiful old town of ST. GENEVIEVE. Passengers for that town had to be landed at Little Rock, some two or three miles above, or taken ashore in the lightest of skiffs.

ST. LOUIS is a fine city, situated on a gentle side hill rising from the river. When the last remnants of the slaveocracy, who formed an incubus upon all the country south and west, is gone forever, then St. Louis, with other towns on the Mississippi river, will improve

and take rank with other places west and north where slavery never held sway. There was considerable anti-slavery feeling in St. Louis before the rebellion, caused by the German population, led by Frank P. Blair, but the great commercial interests rather bowed to the slave holders, from whom they derived much profit. It is a good situation for a great grain mart, to ship via New Orleans, and measures have been taken since the rebellion to open the business by building elevators, etc.

CARONDELET is a suburb of St. Louis, lying on the south. It is a very pleasant place, and easily accessible from St. Louis by the Iron Mountain railroad, over which several trains are run daily. The current is very swift in front of the place at times, so that boats can not land as well as at St. Louis.

We made few landings on either side to examine the towns or make inquiries about the country lying back of them, but I have no doubt a few years will show thriving villages at many points where comparatively small settlements are now found. Cape Girardeau and Commerce, where we landed early one morning, had several substantial-looking houses and places of business, although their markets were very slim, the only articles we were offered in the line of supplies for our mess, on Friday morning, being watermelons and young black bears.

There are several romantic looking places on the west side of the river, which have been given fancy names by the first navigators, and one or two of the same sort on the east. Thus we find at Evans' Landing, on the Illinois side, a place called "The Devil's Bake Oven," from some resemblance of a rock to an old fashioned oven; between Neeley's and Vincil's, on the Missouri shore, is "The Devil's Tea Table;" on the same side, a little further up the river, is "The Devil's Backbone." At one point there is a high bluff coming out to the river, with smooth rock face, some two hundred feet high. Here, in former times, the owner of lead mines near by made shot, having a small building jutting over the top of the bluff, from which he poured the molten lead so that it fell into a pool of water at the bottom. Across a ravine from this natural shot tower is a beautiful private residence, approached by a winding carriage-way from the bank of the river. I was informed that the lady owner of the place (daughter of the original settler), while traveling on the Rhine, was struck with the appearance of a small feudal castle, and the resemblance of its location to this position. Procuring plans, on her return she had this place built and laid out to imitate the Rhine castle. At the foot of the hill, which was nearly smooth toward the river, was a stone house which I was also informed had a stairway leading from the

back side, which set into the hill, up through the hill to the "castle."

The current of the Mississippi river is very swift, running from three to five miles per hour, and in times of high water even faster, in some places. Before the invention of steamboats few attempts were made to navigate the river against this current. Produce from the Ohio and the few settled portions of the upper Mississippi was floated down to New Orleans in flat boats, arks and "broadhorns," which were broken up and sold for old lumber after the lading was disposed of, and the crew made their way home by land—a very slow and hazardous proceeding. The water in the river below the mouth of the Mississippi is very muddy, so that a glass full dipped out of the river and left to stand a short time will show quite a deposit of sand at the bottom. It is used altogether for drinking and culinary purposes on all the boats, and though at first the appearance of it is rather forbidding, a person soon comes to like it, and it is drunk with a relish.

The steamboats navigating the Mississippi and its tributaries are all driven by high pressure engines, and the boilers are provided with places where the sand and sediment from the water can be blown out at short intervals when the boat is running. They are driven by wheels at the side, like those on the Hudson, or by one large wheel at the stern. It is supposed

that a stern-wheel boat can run better in low water than a side-wheel boat, and then it is more convenient for towing purposes. While the wheels at the side are covered with neat wheel houses, as on boats east, the stern-wheel boat has no such protection for its propelling power, and has been likened to a wheelbarrow drawn backwards. Boats are built that carry tolerably heavy loads, and only draw fourteen inches of water. The tow boats, instead of taking the boats in tow astern, connected by tow lines, have their tows lashed forward, and push them. This is rendered necessary by the rapid current and crooked channels of the river, in order that the boats in tow may be completely under control. Sometimes as many as ten loaded coal barges may be seen in tow of one of the powerful Pittsburgh stern-wheel boats, proceeding slowly down the river, a little faster than the flow of the water—just enough to be under control of the pilot in charge. The coal barges have no rudder or means of guidance, but the stern-wheel boat, by reason of its square stern, has at least three rudders, connected with each other by rods, in a rude sort of way, but very strong.

Passenger boats, or "packets," on the Mississippi are generally of the side-wheel kind, built at considerable expense, if intended for the New Orleans trade. Those running on the Ohio, from Cincinnati or Lou-

isville to Memphis or New Orleans, are somewhat shorter than those intended for running on the Mississippi alone, with their wheels farther aft than the latter, a peculiarity rendered necessary in consequence of the locks in the canal around the falls in the Ohio, at Louisville. The packet boats carry freight on the main deck and in a shallow hold, while nearly all the passengers are carried on the deck over the boilers. Sometimes a few deck passengers are carried on the boiler deck. The accommodations for passengers are much more limited in proportion to their capacity for freight than on the Hudson river boats. The passenger deck, as we may style it, is generally arranged with a long saloon, having a tier of state rooms on each side. This saloon is used for a dining and social hall, the after portion of it being generally arranged for the occupancy of ladies and families, and shut off from the forward part by folding doors, closed at night. The ladies' saloon on all regular packets is supplied with a good piano, upon which very frequently one or more of the officers can perform very well. These packets make trips lasting from two days and nights to a week, and consequently passengers require amusement more than on boats where a trip lasts but a single day or night. Consequently, in engaging waiters and a barber for the shop on the guards, care is taken to find some men who can make up a band for danc-

ing. Almost every evening the band takes a position in the saloon, aft, and strikes up for a dance. After the dance, a hint is given to the gentlemen who have shared in it to remember the music. In the forward part of the main saloon, from which a view can be had down its full length, is generally to be found the clerk's office, where all the business of the boat is transacted, and on one side of the tier of state rooms is frequently to be found a bar, where qualifying fluids are dispensed to those who fear to take the water raw. Sometimes this bar is outside of the tier of state rooms, over the guards of the boat. A barber shop is also to be found on the guards, while the kitchen is generally found just forward of the wheel, on the same floor with the saloon. Over the passenger saloons and state rooms is "The Texas," containing a small number of state rooms for the accommodation of the officers, pilots, etc., and on the top of the "Texas" is the pilot house, a place where parties of ladies and gentlemen frequently resort to overlook the surrounding country, and gossip and joke. During the war the pilot houses were always cased with iron for the protection of the occupants, that being the first point aimed at to disable a boat.

In the season for shipping cotton, bales of this article are stowed all about on the freight deck, leaving only space for ingress and egress to the furnaces, and



then the piles are continued on the forecastle and guards until they rise even with the roof of the passenger saloon. Boats so laden are in great danger from fire, and several watchmen are kept in various exposed positions, with buckets of water ; still, if a spark once falls and is unnoticed a single minute, the fate of the boat is sealed—its destruction is almost inevitable, and generally several of the passengers and crew perish with it. The flames spread with such rapidity that but a very short time is left for the escape of those on board. Every steamboat is provided with two heavy spars, rigged with suitable tackle for use when the boats get aground at low water ; a case of frequent occurrence at such season. It is no unusual occurrence to see two or three large packets aground within a short distance of each other at certain points. In going down to Vicksburg the Huntress got aground in “making a crossing” at the head of Island No. 30, and in a few minutes two of the gunboats following were in the same predicament. Boats going down the river, grounding on a sandbar, with the force of the current in addition to their momentum, have a hard job to work off, as frequently the current, at every attempt, forces the boat farther on to the bar. Boats going on a bar at high water sometimes get so firmly set that they remain there for months, until the river falls and rises again, as I have mentioned in a former

chapter. In making a landing steamboats always round to, if going down, so as to land with the bow up stream, the strong current rendering such a proceeding necessary. There are no wharfs or docks along the river, but at large towns or landings where there is much business, wharf boats are tied to the bank, with gang planks ashore, against which the steamers land. These wharf boats have rooms for storing freight, etc., and collect wharfage of all boats landing against them, as well as charge for freight stored.

Among the dangers to which boats navigating the Mississippi are subject, are running upon "wreck heaps"—that is, heaps of debris where boats have sunk in former times—and snags. Boats are most in danger of the "wreck heaps" in going down, and only fear the snags in going up. In August, 1864, the John J. Roe, a passenger steamer, ran on a wreck heap, and was lost, a short distance below New Madrid, early in the morning, during a light fog. The pilot mistook one clump of trees ashore for another farther down, and steering for it, in consequence of the fog, run out of his course a very little. I heard the boat pass in the early morning, and in a very short time after a prolonged whistle was sounded. The captain of the Huntress immediately weighed anchor and ran down to her, finding her fast, with her bottom broke

in for nearly two hundred feet, and her stern broken off partly, so as to hang in the water. The Roe had part of a regiment of Iowa cavalry on board, and many of the horses perished, but the passengers and crew were all saved. The fog cleared almost instantly after the boat grounded. Another boat was lost abreast of Island No. 10 in the October following, by running upon something of the same character. Snags are trees that have fallen into the current with some of the bank, and become fast at the roots. The force of the current keeps the top pointing down stream, scarcely showing a ripple on the surface in many cases. Nothing but the most careful attention on the part of the pilot can keep the boat from running against them. While running in tow of a packet one night the Huntress had a very narrow escape. Boats are frequently seen with guards partially carried away by snags.

## CHAPTER IV.

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*First Experience "Under Fire"—Joining the Huntress—Routine of Life on a Gunboat.*

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ON the fourteenth of June, having all my papers in order, I took a state-room on the naval despatch boat, to leave Mound City on the day following. The *New National* was lying just outside the admiral's flag ship, the *Black Hawk*, while ahead and astern were several other gunboats fitting out to cruise down the river. About ten o'clock that night, while asleep in my room, I was roused by a gun, apparently fired just over my head. In a moment another was heard and then a larger one a little ahead of us. Jumping out of bed I soon slipped on some clothing and went out into the saloon, when I received the following explanation: The naval small pox hospital boat was

moored to an island across the river, near the Kentucky shore. Information had been received the day before that a band of rebel guerrillas intended visiting the hospital to steal the medicines kept there, for the use of the rebels. A signal had been made from the hospital that the guerrillas were coming and the first gun that had disturbed me was from one of the small howitzers on the roof of the Black Hawk, which was followed by another from the other howitzer and then firing was commenced from the large Parrot guns on the forecastle of the Black Hawk, and the hundred pound gun from the Avenger, which soon crept out from the shore, astern of us, and steamed up the river. In the morning it was understood that the alarm was false, caused by the fears of the hospital attendants.

June 15, at 5 P. M., the New National got under weigh and started down the river, and I took my first look at the Mississippi. We passed Columbus before dark, and saw a large number of soldiers of the garrison enjoying themselves bathing in the river. With so many new things to see and examine, I have a very faint remembrance of the first trip to Memphis, for it was at the latter place we found the Huntress, after dark, on the seventeenth. A number of gunboats were lying alongside the coal barges, and it was rather a slippery walk I had across the barges and up

and down the muddy bank, to find the boat which was to be my home for the next fourteen months.

Guided by one of the crew of the *Huntress*, I made my way on board and to the cabin of the commanding officer, Acting Master John S. Dennis, an old whaler, with whom was Lieutenant Commander John G. Mitchell, of the ironclad *Carondelet*, who was in command of the district to which the *Huntress* belonged; and for convenience of quicker movement over his district, extending from Columbus, Kentucky, to Memphis, he had made the *Huntress* his flag ship. All persons in command of a vessel are by courtesy addressed as "captain," and I shall so speak of them hereafter. In the ward room adjoining the captain's cabin, I was introduced to the surgeon, chief engineer and two pilots of the *Huntress*, with whom I was to mess. In consequence of the damage to and loss of vessels in the Red river expedition there were urgent calls for more gunboats to cruise on the Mississippi, and the *Huntress*, a newly-fitted up boat, had been sent down to Memphis in haste, to finish her outfit, without her full complement of officers or crew. Capt. Dennis was a thorough seaman, and having served in the fleet at Hilton Head and before Charleston, he was well acquainted with the naval routine. He had fitted up all it was possible from the Memphis navy yard and received a draft of men (sailors discharged

from the hospital), so that he was ready to go up the river the day following. Captain Mitchell being desirous of examining his whole district, we proceeded, with brief stoppages at the other gunboats in the district (the Carondelet, New Era and Robb), to Columbus, Kentucky, returning in a short time to New Madrid, in the vicinity of which we were required to remain, to act in conjunction with the garrison at that place. As I have summed up the result of a part of my observations on the river in previous chapters, I will now give a brief account of the Huntress and gunboat routine.

Everything possible is regulated by general orders from the secretary of the navy. Thus the arrangement of a boat, the rooms each officer shall occupy, who shall have precedence in the purchase of supplies even, is regulated by orders. The commanding officer of a ship at sea is a complete autocrat. Upon him devolves all the responsibility for the safety of officers and crew. His orders therefore are supreme, and must be obeyed at once without question. He has the best quarters—a large and roomy cabin aft—with staterooms, kitchen, storeroom, etc., for his sole accommodation, also a steward, cook and servant. Sometimes he invites the paymaster or surgeon to mess with him, as they are staff officers, not held as firmly to routine as the line officers, consequently the

familiarity of intimate daily intercourse at all times will not interfere with strict discipline. The ward room, next forward of the captain's cabin, belongs to the officers next in rank, being the line officers, including all ensigns or those ranking between the ensigns and commanding officer, the staff officers, surgeon, paymaster, chief engineer, and, in the Mississippi squadron, the pilots. Each officer messing in the ward room has a stateroom or bedplace to himself, and that mess take precedence next to the cabin, with a steward, cook and servants for the sole work of the mess. Forward of the ward room is the steerage, where the other line officers, assistant engineers, surgeon and paymaster's clerks mess. The right hand side of every vessel, as you look forward, is styled the "starboard side," and is the place of honor. The captain, on some boats, prohibited the other officers from using the guard on that side for usual promenading, and all official visits to the captain must be made that way; on some boats a sentry or orderly is stationed at the door of the captain's cabin, on the starboard side; but there was no such strictness of ceremonial on the Huntress. Boats visiting a gunboat or man-of-war, approach on the starboard or port side, according to the rank of the officer in the boat. The line officers, according to regulations, have their staterooms on the starboard side of the boat, while the staff



occupy the port side, but this regulation was not strictly observed with us. Forward of the steerage on the *Huntress*, and most of the Mississippi gunboats, was another room from which the paymaster's office opened. On these boats the quarter deck was forward of the mess-rooms above mentioned. On the quarter deck is the station of the officer of the watch, who for the time being represents the commanding officer. The line officer next in rank to the captain is styled the executive officer, and all orders are issued through him, and he transmits them to the watch officer and so they are passed to the boatswain or others for execution. With the officer of the watch, on the small gunboats, was a rated man called a quartermaster, who stands on the lookout with a spyglass and reports approaching vessels or any other matter requiring attention. The watches commence at noon, for four hours, or eight bells, the ship's bell being struck regularly at half hour intervals during the watch. At eight bells the officer calls his relief, who stands until six o'clock, then another watch stands until eight, and after that the watches stand for four hours, or eight bells, the change of half or "dog watches," being made daily between four and eight P. M. to prevent officers having to stand the same hours daily. At noon, and at eight in the evening, the quartermaster, before striking eight bells, goes to the captain and reports "eight

bells, sir," and the captain generally replies "make it," which is followed by the usual striking of the bell. Where two or more men-of-war are in company, the senior officer sets the time, and the bells are struck in the order of the rank of the commanding officers. The captain of a vessel is entitled to a boat with a picked crew, for his especial use ; and the captain's coxswain, on a large vessel, is quite an important officer. When transferred from one ship to another, the captain is entitled to take his coxswain and boat's crew, together with his steward and cook with him, if he desires. In leaving a vessel, the inferior officer enters the boat first, but the captain steps from the small boat first. In approaching a man-of-war the boat is hailed, and the answer denotes the rank of the officer and the honors he is entitled to receive on going aboard. Thus a captain answers with the name of his vessel ; ward room officers answer "aye, aye"; and steerage officers "no, no."

Life among the crew on the gun-deck is regulated as rigidly by routine as among the officers. They are divided into messes, and the places where each member of a mess shall eat and sleep is arranged by the commanding officer according to fixed rules. A certain number of "petty officers," rated from the crew, is first selected, among whom are one or more boatswain's mates, a master-at-arms, ship's corporal, quar-

termasters, quartermasters, ship's cook, etc. These petty officers mess together, none of them being allowed to mess with the ordinary crew. All orders requiring a boat's crew or any number of men to execute them, are given through the boatswain's mate of the watch. He blows his silver pipe or whistle and calls "A-l-l H-a-n-d-s," or whatever it may be, in a tone to be heard all through the deck. He calls all hands to turn out and lash their hammocks in the morning; then he calls to breakfast; next to scrub decks, and three mornings in the week to wash clothing. After the decks are all washed up, the captain orders the uniform for the day, which varies according to fancy or the weather, being perhaps (in summer) white shirts, white trowsers, white caps and polished shoes; in winter blue shirts, caps, trowsers and polished shoes, or some combination of the two. After the decks are in order and the men all in uniform, and clothes bags returned to the custody of the master-at-arms or ship's corporal, the men are called to quarters and the division officers inspect the men at the guns, to see that they are all present and uniformed according to order. The division officers report the condition of their men to the executive officer, and he to the captain, who either orders "general quarters" or directs the men to be dismissed to their other duties. The master-at-arms is chief of police, and with his

subordinate, the ship's corporal, keeps a diligent watch for all infractions of discipline. They have the custody of the men's clothes-bags and see that the decks are kept free from dirt and litter. — At two bells (nine o'clock in the evening) one of these officers visits the steerage and puts out all the lights, and an hour later the ward room lights are put out by the same officer, except permission is given by the captain to allow them a little longer. Between half past eleven and twelve o'clock each day the ship's cook takes a sample of the dinner he is preparing for the crew to the watch officer on the quarter deck, to let him see that the food is well cooked and wholesome. If there is anything apparently wrong—a piece of musty or tainted meat or a poor quality of other articles likely to prove injurious if eaten by the crew—the fact is reported to the executive officer, who orders a survey, and if condemned, the food is thrown overboard and new rations of the article condemned issued.

The surgeon each day has a call made by the boatswain's mate for "the sick, lame and lazy," to appear for examination; and he can excuse a man from duty during such time as he considers his health to require.

Care is taken on board of men-of-war to find some kind of employment for the crew so as to keep them from sickness or discontent. Thus the daily routine

includes much sweeping of decks, scrubbing of the same almost every day, and washing paint work about the vessel; and a supply of paints is kept on hand to repaint and brush up the woodwork. At certain hours of the day the men are allowed to overhaul their clothes bags and repair their clothing. The paymaster keeps supplies of ready made clothing, also cloth for making trowsers and shirts, thread, needles and other articles required by the men. Old sailors are generally somewhat dandyish, and exhibit much taste in embroidering and trimming up their shirts, and they like also to have a surplus of buttons on their trowsers.

On Sundays a general muster of the crew is had on the quarter deck. They are all mustered at the guns by their division officers, who carefully inspect them to see that they are clean and correct in their uniforms, and then they are called by the boatswain's mate to muster as above. Here the captain, with all the other officers appear, and the paymaster's clerk calls the roll of the crew. As each man is called he answers with his rating, as "Seaman, sir," "Landsman, sir," or whatever it may be, and passes below to the gun deck. As he passes the captain and executive officer they look to him closely to see that he is correct in uniform and has a neat and proper look. If a bit of dirt is seen on his clothes, or his shoes are not well polished, or his face or hands show dirt, he is called to account.

The crew below are arranged in messes for cooking and eating ; in divisions, for service at the guns, and in watches for other duty. In slinging hammocks regard is had to these arrangements so that the officers know where to find the men needed for any service by night as well as day.

General quarters is when the ports are closed, the battle lanterns lighted, the fires put out and magazine opened with everything arranged for going into action. At such times the men are put through every manœuver of handling the heavy guns, passing cartridges, called off to repel boarders, and in other ways drilled for action. They are armed with cutlasses and revolvers, and a portion also have muskets, and the old-fashioned boarding pikes are still found among the arms on board men-of-war, although the bayonet is a much more serviceable weapon. I will close this chapter by relating two incidents occurring during general quarters.

The first time the crew of the *Huntress* went to general quarters was while on an expedition with a detachment of the garrison from New Madrid to Island No. 8. The detachment were scouring the island when the captain ordered "general quarters." The captain took his position in the pilot house, from which speaking tubes ran to the different divisions at the guns below. After the men were all at quarters

the captain gave a particular caution not to fire any of the guns, but to go through all the motions with care. He then commenced giving his orders for training and elevating the guns, finally giving the order "fire," when bang went one of the guns, and the shell with which it was loaded was lodged in the bank, near where a colored man was standing, a careless spectator of the scene. "General quarters" came to a sudden stop just then, while the ship's cook, who was captain of that gun received a severe reprimand. Where the spectator on shore went to was never ascertained.

The captain of one of the gunboats on the Tennessee river, soon after starting on his cruise, thought he would exercise his men at general quarters about midnight. Accordingly the drummer beat to quarters and the captain stood by to see how quick the men could get their hammocks lashed and take their places at the guns. The men had scarcely taken their stations and answered to their division officers, before a shell from a gun on shore came in at the stern and swept through the center of the gun deck, cutting down several of the hammocks, but fortunately injuring none of the crew. The rebels had no doubt intended a surprise with their guns, but by good fortune the captain was in a position to surprise them by returning their fire at once. It may be that they supposed by hearing the beat to quarters on the gunboat that they had been discovered.

## CHAPTER V.

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*Hickman and Columbus, Kentucky—Guerrilla Bands—Incidents—A Specimen of Southern Chivalry—The Story of a Union Man—The end of one Guerrilla—Narrow Escape of a Reported Guerrilla.*

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HAVE spoken in a previous chapter of the situations of Hickman, Columbus and other towns along the river, and I will now give reminiscences and experiences of gunboat life in their vicinity.

Hickman was visited on our first trip up from Memphis, in June, 1864. As I have before mentioned it was garrisoned for short periods by the government forces, and at the time of our approach two passenger boats were lying at the bank taking off the few soldiers who had been stationed there, and many citizens were leaving with the soldiers. The gunboat Robb was at anchor off the place, protecting



the evacuation. It was a bright and beautiful Sunday, and there was quite a show of life around where the boats were laying, but it looked dull up in the town. After laying there a short time we passed up to Columbus and returned the day following to find the place as quiet as though it was completely deserted. After tying up to the bank and laying there an hour or two a man came on board to see if he could not sell some berries, and after a little time another man came on board in a stealthy kind of way, to inform the captain that a gang of guerrillas were laying back of the town, and if we did not get away from the bank before dark they would be likely to steal down upon us. Afterwards we visited Hickman several times and made many acquaintances there; and on election day in November following, we lay off the place with the crew at quarters to guard the polls from interruption by the scoundrels who continually infested the vicinity. There was always a gang hanging about, so that it was never regarded as safe for us to go out of sight of the gunboat without a guard. One evening the captain's steward went a short distance from the boat to a house where he had before purchased milk, taking two of our best men, with muskets, as a guard. He went into the house, leaving his guards at the door. A gang crept up and captured the guards, without making the least disturbance, and for sometime we supposed the

men had deserted ; but about four months afterwards a letter was received from them in a rebel prison in Mississippi telling of their capture. At Columbus I made the acquaintance of several citizens of Hickman who had been compelled to leave there to save their lives. Among these acquaintances was the rector of the Episcopal church, who owned a plantation a few miles back of Hickman. Politically he was a virulent opponent of Mr. Lincoln, and run for congress in 1864 in opposition to the republican who was elected. He had been driven from his plantation by the so-called guerrillas, but in reality robber gangs who resided in his vicinity. They were accustomed to disguise themselves so as not to be readily recognized and visit places where they supposed the people had money, and demand it, using various violent means to obtain it. During the absence of Parson Coghill (my informant) they had visited his place and threatened to hang his wife, finally plundering the house of some fine wearing apparel and other valuables. To show the boldness of these thieves, I may remark that the wife of one of them came on board the Huntress wearing one of the dresses thus stolen. The same band visited a neighbor whom they found at home. Demanding some money which they believed to be in his possession, upon his refusal they put a rope about his neck and hung him up two or three times, but he

proved obstinate. They then put a cord around his forehead, and using the barrel of a revolver as a lever twisted the cord so tight that his eyes fairly stuck out, then he succumbed and produced about \$700. This last victim got on track of the robbers and took means to get evidence to procure conviction when civil law ruled again in Kentucky, but the scoundrels heard of his proceedings and waylaid and shot him. I give these two stories as well authenticated and worthy of belief.

It seemed as though these guerrilla bands were a sort of rebel "home guard," from all the information we could obtain. We heard of them going about in squads of six to twelve, and once or twice during the time I was on the river I heard of several squads joining together to make a conscripting raid, after recruits and deserters from the rebel army. We made the acquaintance of several families where the man of the house kept a hiding place away from home to which he resorted occasionally for a night's lodging, when "conscripting" bands were about.

In August, 1864, we had the following adventure with a band, known as Cushman's, at Tiptonville: Lying at New Madrid, one morning a Louisville and Memphis packet came down, and the captain requested the Huntress to accompany him to Tiptonville to guard him while he took on board a quantity

of corn for Memphis. As the packet could run faster than the Huntress, she took us in tow, lashed along side. As we approached Tiptonville the usual signals were made by the packet's whistle for landing, but there was no show of life on the bank, which was very suspicious. Captain Dennis of the Huntress, who was on the roof of his boat, ordered a division of men armed with muskets on the forecastle of the packet to go on shore, but before she made her landing that was countermanded and orders given for them to return on the gunboat and go to quarters, the tow lines being cast off from the packet. As the Huntress backed out into the river a man was discovered some rods below, under the bank, making signals to back out. As soon as he came within hail, he gave us to understand that Cushman and his gang were in rear of the storehouse, hoping to capture the packet. A twenty-four pound shell from one of our howitzers was dropped behind the storehouse as well as could be done with all the elevation we could give, followed in quick succession by another, and then a thirty pounder from the Parrot followed. Soon after the first shell was dropped the citizens swarmed on the bank, and as we made the landing, came on board to inform us that Cushman had been watching for the packet expected to take the corn off, and had notified the inhabitants that if any of them showed

themselves to warn the boat off, he would shoot them. He and his men kept secreted not even watching to see if a gunboat was with the packet when she came down. The man who gave the alarm to us was an army spy who had been staying at Tiptonville a few weeks taking ambrotypes. He had packed up to leave on the packet, but Cushman made him unpack to take some pictures of himself, and then very kindly traded [even] his old boots for a new pair worn by the artist, in payment for the pictures. The guerrillas left in a hurry as soon as they found out the gunboat was in company with the packet. Before leaving Tiptonville that day a gentleman living about half a mile back from the river, on the road by which the guerrillas retreated, came on board with a piece of shell which he said struck before the door of his house, throwing sand on to his dinner table. He said the guerrillas were very little in advance of the shell, retreating as fast as their horses could carry them.

Dr. Edward McGavock, who occupied a plantation about forty miles above Memphis, in Arkansas, had his house iron clad, that is, the doors and windows secured with boiler plate shutters on the inside, loopholed as a security against the guerrilla or robber bands who infested his vicinity. In January, 1865, two boat's crews from the Huntress attempted to capture a gang who were threatening Dr. McGavock's

place. They went up into a bayou, to an island and found the remains of a camp, but the rascals had fled. They had annoyed the doctor for a long time.

In September, 1864, the following incident occurred which I relate as an illustration of vaunted southern chivalry. Several union men staying at New Madrid, who had been driven from their homes in the adjoining county of Pemiscot, made application to the commander of the Huntress for assistance in getting their families up to New Madrid. Accordingly orders were sent to the gunboat New Era, cruising below, to look out for the refugees, and one of the men of the party went down to gather the families at Carruthersville. The New Era anchored near there to call in a packet and protect the taking on board the women and children. They were encamped about two days before a packet passed up, and the second night of their lying there a party of rebels came and fired two or three volleys into the camp. Fortunately no one was injured but their will was all the same. The crew of the New Era were called to quarters and a few shells sent over the camp, which drove off the rebels, and the next morning the whole party were taken on board the gunboat for safety until a packet came up.

One day in August, 1864, as two officers were going down the bank at New Madrid, to go on board the Huntress, they passed a man who asked if they

wanted to enlist any men on the gunboat. Being informed that they did, he followed along, and in a few minutes he was examined and shipped and on duty below. He proved to be an excellent, trusty man, and as soon as a vacancy occurred he was rated as a quartermaster, a position in which he served for months, very much to the satisfaction of the officers, and became a general favorite. His family, or the females of it, were in Pemiscot county when he enlisted, from whence he and his older sons and a son-in-law had been driven by the rebels. During the several months that he was on board the *Huntress* he told me several incidents of his life, many of which I verified by inquiries of people I met on shore; and although many accounts of the sufferings of loyal citizens have been published heretofore, I think a brief synopsis of the story of this man may prove interesting. Martin, as I shall call him (that being one of his names although not his last one), at the opening of the rebellion, was a farmer near the line of Kentucky in northwestern Tennessee. He was a man of about forty-four years of age, not quite exempt from service in the militia. During the time of the secession agitation in 1861, he was out drilling in a regiment under command of Col. Bradford, a lawyer of Union City, who was afterwards assassinated while a prisoner, after surrendering to Forrest at Fort Pillow.

Some of the secessionists brought out a rebel flag for the regiment and tendered it to the colonel, but he refused to receive it, telling the persons that the stars and stripes were good enough for his regiment. Martin, with many others of the men stood with the colonel and refused to be driven into the rebel army, but the husband of one of his daughters went, with several of the neighbors. Soon a system of persecutions and petty annoyances were commenced against Martin and his family, and among other things the parents of his son-in-law, who had gone into the rebel army, managed to get possession of the infant child of said son-in-law and kept it in concealment away from its mother for months, carrying it over into Missouri, where it was finally found in an emaciated condition, showing evidence of brutal treatment, so that it died in a short time. The annoyances and persecutions of the family were kept up, increasing in malignity and being carried to such lengths that at last they concluded the only safety for them was to leave their farm and go among strangers. So they escaped, concealing their movements from their neighbors, and took refuge in Pemiscot county, Missouri. Here they remained for a year, but the rebels attempted again to conscript the men into the rebel army, and at last Martin and two of his sons and a son-in-law made their way to New Madrid. The two sons went



into the union army where one of them lost his life, while Martin himself endeavored to make a living by working about the town, until he finally found a refuge on board the Huntress. His family was among those taken off at Carruthersville, as mentioned above.

We shipped many other refugees during the time the Huntress cruised about New Madrid, the most of whom told stories of hardships and wrongs suffered at the hands of their rebel neighbors, but I did not have opportunities to verify them as I did those told by Martin.

In April, 1865, Gen. Osband came to Randolph and Fulton, Tennessee (Fulton being on the north side of the mouth of the Big Hatchie river and Randolph on the south), with two transports loaded with troops to scour the country on each side of the Big Hatchie river and clear it of the guerrillas who had been infesting it for months. There had been a great many complaints of outrages by guerrillas and robber bands in that section of country, and the party which went out from Randolph succeeded in capturing one man against whom they found evidence of a very strong character. This fellow, known about the country as Mat Luxton, with some witnesses, was brought in to Randolph by the party. Gen. Osband himself accompanied the party from Fulton, and his transport lay there under the protection of the

Huntress during his absence, another gunboat being at Randolph to guard the transport there. When Gen. Osband went down to Randolph, on his return, he found the party in waiting for him, with the prisoner and witnesses. Gen. Osband immediately ordered a court martial, which assembled in the cabin of his transport, and in about half an hour after his arrival the court martial had been ordered, assembled, tried the prisoner, found him guilty, sentenced him to be hung, and before the full hour had expired, he was hanging to the limb of a tree, where his body remained from Saturday evening until Sunday in the night. The Huntress passed down Sunday afternoon and I saw the body still hanging there, obtaining the particulars, as I have given them above, from the officers of the gunboat who had witnessed the whole affair. Gen. Osband left orders that the body was not to be taken down except by his orders, and on his arrival at Memphis he gave permission to the stepfather of the dead man to remove him for burial; and on the packet that left Memphis Sunday night a party came up with a coffin, taking the body to Nashville, as I was informed. Complaints had been frequently made during the war that the president was too lenient in pardoning rebels, but Gen. Osband, in this case, made sure that he was not given an opportunity.

In the unsettled condition of the thinly populated

country, on the west side of the Mississippi, it was very difficult to get to the rights of all reports made to us. In July and August, 1864, I was occasionally called upon to assist the division commander, Capt. Mitchell, in his correspondence. The captain of the *New Era*, stationed below, was frequently getting prisoners charged with various offenses, whose cases he would report to Capt. Mitchell, who would again report them to Admiral Porter. One case which had rather a singular ending, I well remember. Several reports were received and forwarded, regarding a certain prisoner, and at last the admiral sent orders to have the said prisoner delivered up to the people on shore near Osceola, with orders for the people aforesaid to shoot or hang him, as might suit their convenience. These orders I copied and forwarded as directed, and the whole matter passed from my mind until the following May, when the rebellion having ended, all the people ashore who desired to come down to a peace footing were hastening on board the gunboat to take the oath of allegiance. One day a party of citizens came on board at Osceola, desiring to take the oath. Taking some blanks I filled in the names as requested, until one, given by a tall, lank looking man, struck me as somewhat familiar. Keeping him until the last, after the others had left the cabin, I engaged him in conversation, and finally

asked him if he had ever been a prisoner on board the *New Era*. He very frankly acknowledged that he was the man, and said that he was put on shore as ordered, but the people could not believe that he deserved death, and so he was allowed to live and mend his ways. Whether his trade, blacksmithing, had anything to do with his reprieve, I did not learn, but I could not but remember the story of the blacksmith in Scotland who was sentenced to be hung, whose reprieve was asked for on account of his being the only one in a large section thereabout, the people offering to hang a poor weaver in his place.

## CHAPTER VI.

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### *Trade Regulations—Smuggling—Incidents.*

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PEOPLE at the north can have but a faint idea of the inconveniences suffered by those who resided in the rebellious states for want of trade facilities. In the first place the system of slavery caused business before the rebellion, to center in a few seaports and places where cotton, tobacco and sugar, the great staples, could be forwarded to market. The planters purchased all the supplies needed for their families and slaves in New Orleans, Memphis, Vicksburg, St. Louis, Natchez, etc., and there was little or no necessity for village and cross-road stores so numerous and well filled as we have at the north. Village and country stores, so necessary for a free population, were discouraged by slave-holders, on several accounts, one of the principal

of which was the chance offered the slaves to dicker articles from the plantation. There were some small planters of course who needed such conveniences for trade as we have enumerated, but they had to arrange with some rich friend and neighbor to send their produce to market and purchase supplies. The great staples of cotton, tobacco and sugar, above named, were cultivated almost exclusively in the southern states, the corn, pork and flour for feeding the inhabitants being obtained almost entirely from the north. It was thought more profitable to devote the uneducated labor of the slaves to the smallest variety of crops rather than diversify it, as can be done with free labor. It will be remembered that in the winter of 1860-1, while state after state at the south was "seceding," an alarm was given that the people of some of the seceding states were suffering for food, and large quantities of corn and pork were allowed to be shipped from Cincinnati and Chicago, nominally to keep the people from starving, but as I now think to lay up a stock of food for the armies then being recruited. In 1861 the south began to raise crops of corn and some other grains, and in the course of two or three years managed to supply itself with the staple articles of "hog and hominy," prime necessaries in every southern family. Tea, sugar, coffee, and the other articles found on every northern table, also considered neces-

sary at the south, were very difficult to obtain, and in time became very scarce. The stocks of dry goods, especially those most used, and such things as pins, needles, thread, etc., were soon exhausted. Many planters had large stocks of cotton and tobacco, worth thousands of dollars, but they were forced to wear old ragged clothes and live on corn bread and bacon—the latter very scantily salted—for salt was one of the scarcest of articles. All kinds of expedients were resorted to to obtain salt; a barrel of which, costing only two or three dollars in Cairo or St. Louis, would bring ten dollars at New Madrid; and across the river in Kentucky, it was cheap at fifteen dollars. The most stringent regulations were adopted to prevent salt being sold into hands that would allow it to pass into the interior, where it could be used to cure meats for the rebel armies. In the fall of 1864, after much negotiation among army department commanders, and by the consent of the commander of the Mississippi squadron, about fifty barrels of salt were allowed to be landed at Hickman, Kentucky, for the supply of some planters who assumed to be as near loyal as they could be and live there. In a short time we ascertained that several barrels of that salt had been taken a few miles back into the country and sold into rebel hands for *fifty dollars per barrel in gold*. Capt. Mitchell, the district commander, sent a guard of sailors

on shore from the Huntress, and took the nominally loyal man who had connived at this transfer, and he was kept on board a close prisoner until we left the station, when he was transferred to the Sybil, our successor on that beat.

Wherever the government established a military post and garrison, traders would crowd in and locate themselves. But trade was by no means free. In the first place, before a man could get permission to do business, he was compelled to show that he was not a rebel and obtain a license from the commander of the department; then, when he went to St. Louis or Cairo to lay in a stock of goods, he must submit his bills of purchases to the provost marshal, who examined them and endorsed a permit to ship. Every boat carrying freight and passengers had a government agent on board, whose duty it was to see that nothing was landed at any wood-yard or plantation landing, not specially permitted by the provost marshal. All articles not thus permitted were liable to seizure and return to the place from whence shipped. A merchant having received his goods at New Madrid, could not sell them except according to regulation. A citizen residing inside the lines of the post could purchase articles less than one dollar in value without obstruction; but no article or single purchase of various articles costing over one dollar could be made by a cit-



izen, nor purchase of any amount by a person outside the line of pickets, without a permit for the same being obtained of the post provost marshal; and when the person passed the pickets, the bundle of goods and bill and permit were duly examined and compared.

During the summer of 1864, while the *Huntress* was at New Madrid and vicinity, a ferry was licensed across to Madrid Bend, in Kentucky. Every day the ferrymen, who lived in "The Bend," brought over a load of people to trade at New Madrid. They were landed on the *Huntress*, and then went ashore to make their purchases. After their goods were purchased and permitted by the provost marshal, an examination was always made of the parcels by the officer of the deck, before the ferry boat was allowed to return. Most of those who came over to trade were women, some of whom professed to have rode on horseback from twenty to forty miles, in order to do their trading. Coffee, sugar, shoes and hoop skirts, were generally found on each bill. Many expedients were resorted to by the ladies to obtain boots for their male friends, but they were seldom allowed to pass, on account of the danger of their going to rebel soldiers. Sometimes a man would come over with a dilapidated pair of shoes, and if well vouched for, might obtain a pair of boots, but no one could get two pair on any

consideration. Once a man tried this plan: He purchased a pair of boots and had his bill for the same permitted, then putting them on he walked about town awhile, and went a second time to the store, showed his permit to a different clerk and purchased another pair. These he carried away under his arm, but as he passed the guard-house he was challenged, and fearing punishment, he threw his second pair away and run. At one time a man living a few miles up the river from New Madrid succeeded in procuring five barrels of salt, with a view of smuggling a part of it into Tennessee, opposite Island No. 10. He went to the provost marshal and gave in written requests from several of his neighbors for one barrel each. After he had obtained the salt his plan was discovered, and then the Huntress was sent up to take it away. A portion of it which he had stored for smuggling purposes was taken, while that distributed among the families was left.

In August, 1864, while lying at New Madrid, a Memphis packet came along and asked convoy from the Huntress to wood-yards in the bend. We accompanied her to three and after she had purchased all she had room for, the captain announced that she would not have to stop for wood again before reaching Memphis. This was said before all the wood was on board. The passengers were called to dinner while

the wood was being loaded, and after dinner the captain of the *Huntress* saw two large packing trunks and two valises on the bank, and made inquiry as to their owner or owners, there being something suspicious in their appearance. All that could be ascertained was that they were taken ashore by the porter of the packet, but he could not identify the men ordering him to take them. The trunks were examined, and were found to be filled with shoes, and the valises contained two pairs of Colt's revolvers, army size, with over 100,000 gun caps. The articles were all seized, and being contraband, the boat might have also been seized, but believing the officers wholly innocent of complicity in the attempt to smuggle arms and caps into rebel hands, a bond was taken from the officers and the packet allowed to go, the porter being detained a prisoner in irons and under guard, to see if he could not be made to remember who were the parties owning the articles seized. The porter could not or would not tell, but we afterwards ascertained that two young men among the passengers, owners of the goods, jumped overboard from the packet and swam ashore some time during the night.

In the winter following, a quantity of butter and lard in tubs which was being landed under a special permit at Hickman, as the property of a lady passenger on one of the packets, was seized, and on exami-

nation a quantity of quinine and powder in kegs and other contraband articles were found concealed therein. It was ascertained on farther investigation that a gang was engaged in the business who had managed to smuggle ashore quite a quantity of articles for the rebels, at various landings, before their plans were discovered.

In the latter part of the year 1864 and the beginning of 1865, there was a great pressure upon the government to allow the crop of cotton just gathered to be got out for market. Cotton was worth from sixty cents to one dollar per pound, and mills were stopping at the north for want of it. Regulations were adopted to facilitate the marketing of cotton, and owners shipping were allowed to purchase one-half the value of their cotton in family supplies. Any person desiring to ship cotton was required to send to the government agent at Memphis and obtain a written permit to ship a certain number of bales. Armed with this permit he would then call upon a gunboat to guard its shipment, for no packet could take it except the gunboat was at hand for convoy and to endorse the permit. With a permit for ten bales he could ship any less number, but he could not make a larger shipment, and if he had but a single bale ready his permit could not be used again. The endorsement by the captain of a gunboat that it had been once used destroyed its

future value. Having landed his cotton in Memphis, Cairo or St. Louis, he was required to pay one-quarter of its value as a special tax (if raised in any of the states in rebellion), and then could purchase his supplies, which must be landed at the same place from which his cotton had been taken, that landing also being certified and protected by a gunboat. Afterwards a few trading boats were licensed to carry supplies, not contraband of war, and exchange them with planters for cotton and tobacco. They could only do business however under convoy of a gunboat. The competition between the regular packets and special trading boats was sometimes very sharp.

Captain Mitchell, who commanded the district next south of Memphis, and extending up White river, in March 1865, at one time received from Acting Rear Admiral Lee two letters preferring charges against him. One was from the captain of a packet who accused him of favoring the special trading boats to the damage and neglect of the regular packets; and the other was from the owner of a trading boat, who charged him with going off with packets and leaving him on expense without protection for trading. The admiral left him to consider the dilemma without attempting to direct him in the premises.

In the latter part of February 1865, the *Huntress* being at Memphis for a supply of coal, an arrangement

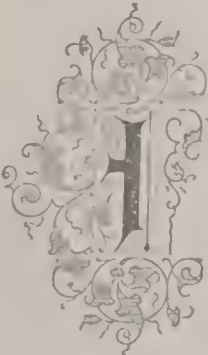
was made by a packet to take the gunboat in tow and visit several landings on our beat to ship cotton and land supplies. We thus accompanied her twenty-four hours, obtaining considerable cotton, and landing supplies purchased with cotton previously shipped. Another time, being at Hale's Point, a packet landed to take on some cotton, having a passenger on board with supplies permitted to be landed at Ashport, a few miles below. He begged the captain of the Huntress to allow them to be landed there rather than to be obliged to take them to St. Louis and return, paying freight each way, Ashport being on the same side of the river, the desired permit was given. When the packet left, the gunboat accompanied her to a wood yard a few miles up the river. The next day we landed at Hale's Point again, and learned that the Huntress had hardly passed out of sight around a bend in the river before a gang of guerilla thieves of the class noticed in a previous chapter, came in and with loaded guns, took their pick of the goods just landed, ending with the coat of the owner, in one pocket of which was his pocketbook with the balance of cash received for his cotton. They left the bale-rope and bagging he had brought to pack the balance of his crop, but other articles were taken very freely.

## CHAPTER VII.

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*Trading Incidents Continued—Rebel Prisoners—Refugees—Closing up.*

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 HAVE spoken in a previous chapter of the duty gunboats were called upon to perform in preventing all crossing from one side of the river to the other. All skiffs, dugouts, etc., were destroyed wherever found, except in a very few cases where special permits were given. Still scarcely a day passed when cruising a short distance from New Madrid, that we did not break up one or more boats. In rounding a sharp bend in the river we quite frequently came upon a man crossing or attempting to cross in some kind of a boat. In the winter, when the business of shipping cotton became quite brisk, it was very common for a person receiving supplies to endeavor to put a portion across the river in contravention of the regulations.

The army quartermaster and commissaries required large quantities of corn, potatoes and other produce for the men and animals in the army at Memphis, and permits were gladly given to ship such articles from any plantation along the river bank, consigned to the quartermaster. In August 1864, we had word that there was a large quantity of corn in sacks waiting shipment on the Tennessee side, against Island, 10. Taking a detachment of soldiers from the garrison at New Madrid, we ran up there to hail in a packet and ship the corn. While waiting, information was received that there was a protracted meeting in progress a mile or two from the storehouse, at which we might find a few rebel soldiers home on furlough. The officer in command of the soldiers on board requested permission to go to the meeting. Permission being given, in the course of the afternoon he returned bringing quite a number of the congregation, including one or two ministers (Campbellite). It appeared that our men were discovered before they got quite to the "hall," where the meetings were held, by one of the rebel soldiers, who commenced firing on the detachment as he ran. He was joined by the other rebel soldiers, and they all escaped together, after a lively little skirmish in which nobody was hurt. After quite a long talk with the congregation thus brought to us they were set at liberty with a caution against



entertaining rebel soldiers. That night, while lying at the bank, there was a terrible storm which blew down the storehouse and nearly wrecked the Huntress. Our sentries on shore were also fired upon by guerrillas, but fortunately all escaped unharmed, and the next day a boat came along to take the corn.

In February 1865 we received information that some parties were engaged in smuggling supplies from the vicinity of Cottonwood Point, Missouri, into Tennessee, and orders were given to look into the matter. Accordingly, running in on the Tennessee side a short distance below the place where it was charged the smuggled goods had been landed, a party of men was sent on shore in charge of two of the watch officers, with orders to go up and examine the place. The officer in command had served in the army previous to coming into the navy, and was well qualified for his duty. He led his party up through the woods and had pickets posted all about the house before his presence was suspected. Having made all his dispositions he started through the clearing for the house. Before he reached it the man who had been smuggling saw him and started out to escape. He passed near one of the pickets, who ordered him to halt, and on his refusal, shot him through the body. Entering the house the officer found a rebel lieutenant from Arkansas with three soldiers of his company, going home on

a furlough, together with several citizens from the surrounding country. The man who was shot while trying to escape, being supposed to be mortally wounded, was left to be cared for by the family, while the rebel soldiers and citizens were brought down to the Huntress as prisoners. The soldiers were taken up to New Madrid and turned over to the provost marshal there, who sent them north; and the citizens, after being detained a few days, were allowed to go upon signing a written parole and oath of allegiance. During the time that the rebel soldiers were with us, one of them exhibited to me a "Confederate States Almanac for the year 1865, the fourth year of the Independence of the Confederate States." It was published in Mobile, and was a far-off imitation of the Tribune and other almanacs of its class at the north, I very gladly purchased it and sent it home as an interesting reminiscence of the rebellion. It contains statistics of the confederate states, accounts of the victories won by their armies, brief statements of laws passed by their congress, etc. The compiler had a singular habit of claiming victories for many affairs where the histories generally give the advantage to the union forces.

Stopping one day in the winter of 1865 to guard the landing of some supplies; a gentleman came on board and begged the captain for a permit to have

some supplies landed in the absence of a gunboat. He said his family was suffering for the want of some of them and they had already passed his place three times, the packet captain refusing to land without a permit. He said he had to pay freight each time they passed. An order was written to the government agent on the packet to land the goods, and we heard no more of him.

The rebels levied a tax on articles taken out of their lines whenever they had an opportunity. At first they levied the tax in kind, but they found some difficulty in realizing on cotton thus taken for taxes. In the spring of 1865 a gentleman came on board the *Huntress*, then at Fulton, Tennessee, and gave information that several bales of cotton taken by the rebel government for taxes, were stored in a shed, a few miles below on the opposite side of the river, in Arkansas. We ran down there and took the cotton, carrying it to Memphis, where it was delivered to the government agent.

In April, after the news had been received of the capture of Richmond, while cruising above Osceola, the quartermaster on watch reported a man making signals from the shore, and as we crossed over we saw a few bales of cotton on the levee. The owner asked to have a packet then in sight hailed in to take his cotton. While standing off to hail the packet, three

men in soldier overcoats were seen to steal out from the rear of a house a few rods from where the cotton laid, and make towards a swamp. Orders were given by the captain of the Huntress to have the guns manned on the port side, and the man on shore was told to call on the fugitives to halt. They paid no attention to the call but the three men mounted two horses that had been hitched behind a shed and hurried off. A few shells were fired at them, over the house, very much, as they claimed, to the alarm of the inmates, but the only effect on the fugitives was to make them hurry along. When the packet landed we obtained a paper from her giving information of the surrender of Lee. The owner of the plantation, with whom we were well acquainted, also obtained a paper, and when he read the news pronounced it a confederate victory, saying that "Lee had been made too much of by the confederate government. That he was a weak man not equal to the position." "Now," said he, "the confederates can go on to fight with a good heart for five years longer if necessary." This planter was apparently a well informed man on general subjects, had visited Saratoga in 1827, and lost his only two sons fighting under Beauregard at Shiloh, but he and his daughters who remained at home, were arrant rebels, and took every opportunity to speak against the union. The cotton that we landed to ship.

belonged to a small planter in the vicinity, who told us that the three men we saw hurrying away were rebel officers who had been endeavoring to collect the export tax on his cotton. On his return from Memphis he procured some confederate money to pay the tax, but the rebel revenue collectors did not call for it, and so he generously presented a portion of it to the officers of the Huntress. One of the rebel officers who escaped us was a son-in-law of the owner of the plantation. He was a member of the naval academy at Annapolis at the breaking out of the rebellion, and deserted and went to his home in Missouri. In a few weeks after the escapade above mentioned he came to us at Osceola with a flag of truce and surrendered himself for parole. After his parole was signed we had a hearty laugh together over the ride above mentioned.

I have spoken in a previous chapter of the trading boats which bartered supplies for cotton. They had some very narrow escapes. One which went up the Forked Deer river into Tennessee had an officer shot and was taken possession of two or three times by guerrilla bands, but the crew managed to ransom themselves. One which came down to us had been up the Tennessee or Cumberland river the previous year, when Hood went to Nashville. It had been fired upon by a rebel battery which sent two shells

through the pilot house, smashing the wheel, but the pilot fortunately escaped. The boat bore the marks of the hard usage it had received. A boat licensed to trade with the fleet met with an exciting adventure near Nashville when Hood came up there. She was well fitted up, and the owner had his wife and mother on board and a chambermaid to wait on them. A rebel battery was planted on a bluff, and brought to bear on this and several other boats as they passed around a bend in the river. A ball from the battery came in a short distance aft the smoke stack, with a downward aim, went through the floor of the cabin, where it came in contact with an iron pipe which caused it to glance upward and then it passed under a table between the wife and mother of the owner of the boat, cutting off the head of the chambermaid who was standing a short distance from them, waiting on the table. I was on board this boat a few weeks afterwards and saw the marks made by the ball.

The union refugees, white and black, were calling on us for assistance in one way or another almost ever day, even after the rebellion had collapsed. Sometimes in cruising we would be hailed by men from a swamp, where they claimed to have been driven by rebel guerrillas or conscripting officers, who would ask to be taken on board and sent to Cairo. At one time in August 1864 we were hailed near mid-

night, from a swamp above Island 10, in Missouri, and took on board two men and two women and children. The women hailed us, and then called the men from their hiding places. All these fugitives claimed to be unionists, but they seemed in general to have very little understanding about the matters in controversy, and probably wanted to get out of the way of the fighting. Occasionally the men came to us to ship, but in several cases they deserted in a few weeks or months. Most of them were quite ignorant, unable to read or write. We shipped several negroes who interested themselves in learning to read and write as soon as they were messes on deck, but hardly one of the white refugees expressed any desire to learn.

In April 1865 while lying near the head of Island No. 34, which is below Fort Pillow, we saw two dugouts coming down, and hailed them to come to us, but the current was very swift and they were unable to get out of it to come alongside. We could see that each dugout contained a negro man and family. They managed to get ashore on the island below, and then the two men got into one dugout and came up to us. They were truly forlorn looking objects. They said they came from a small town a few miles back from the river above, and were going to Memphis. They gave as an excuse for leaving their home, that white men were killing negroes about there, and they

had run for their lives. In their own language. "They 'uns are mad at we 'uns cause you 'uns have whipped 'em ; we 'uns haint dun nothin." They were furnished with rations and allowed to proceed down the river. The war was so nearly closed that the boats were allowed to go unobstructed.

In September 1864, while the rebel Gen. Price was making his raid into Missouri to try to make a diversion in favor of Hood, who was being hard pressed in Atlanta by Sherman, all the passenger boats on the Mississippi were taken up by the government to transport troops, and for several days no boats passed up nor down. During that time great anxiety was felt as to the whereabouts of Gen. Mower who was marching his division through Arkansas and Missouri to strike Price in the rear. Gen. Mower had cut loose from his base at the south, and Gen. Rosekrans, in command at St. Louis, sent orders for the post commandant at New Madrid to send out a scout in search of Gen. Mower. This scout left New Madrid on a Sunday, and much to our surprise, about midnight on Monday he returned with the desired information, having traveled, as he claimed, over one hundred miles. It had been the intention of Capt. Mitchell of the Huntress to proceed to Memphis on Tuesday morning but when the scout returned orders were at once given to hoist anchor and proceed up the river with



all speed. Arrived at Columbus, a faster gunboat, the *Sybil*, Lieutenant Commander H. H. Gorringe, was lying there, and so Capt. Mitchell hurriedly wrote his dispatch and ordered me to go on board the other boat and carry the dispatch to Acting Admiral Lee. It appeared that the commandant of the post at Columbus had sent for a gunboat to assist him in defending that place, the reported northward march of Hood causing an alarm in all the garrisoned places on the river. The *Huntress* was thus detained for some weeks at and about Columbus, and a second gunboat was sent to us named the *Siren*, which lay with us before Columbus for some days.

An amusing incident occurred while the two gunboats lay at Columbus which I will briefly relate to show what small grounds will create an alarm. There is a system of signals in use, consisting of several flags of different colored bunting, by which all men-of-war can communicate with each other. Each ship has its number. The *Siren*, being commanded by an officer of a lower grade than Capt. Mitchell, was sent out in the river to lay at anchor while the *Huntress* laid at the bank of the river. One day to practice the signal officers, Capt. Mitchell signalled to know how much coal there was on board the *Siren*. It took some little time to ask and answer this question, and before the signaling was completed quite an anxious

crowd had gathered on shore to know whether we had any great or alarming news.

One of the last duties the *Huntress* was called on to perform before going up to Mound City station, to be put out of commission, was to guard the mouth of the Big Hatchie below Fulton, Tennessee, to prevent the escape of Jeff Davis. After the surrender of Lee and Johnson with their armies, it will be remembered that the confederate president and a few followers disappeared for some days and no tidings could be obtained of them. The rebel armies were still in existence on the western side of the Mississippi, and it was thought that Mr. Davis and all of his government officers who were with him would endeavor to escape west and uphold their standard there. The Hatchie rises in the southern part of Tennessee and flows in a northwest course, emptying into the Mississippi near Fulton. It was thought that Davis with his immediate followers might reach the Hatchie and make their way down in a boat and so get into the wilds and swamps of Arkansas. A very careful watch was kept by the crew of the *Huntress* for many days, until the news was received of the capture of Davis in Georgia. The country through which the Hatchie runs was filled with rebel emissaries and friends of the fallen cause, so that Mr. Davis would have had no lack of assistance if he had come that

way. Once over into Arkansas he could have easily escaped into Texas.

I will close this chapter and my reminiscences with an incident which occurred to us while waiting upon a trading boat at Osceola in February 1865. The mess stewards were always on the look-out for eggs, milk, chickens, etc. One day the steerage steward went about half a mile away from the landing to a house, which he entered, hoping to get some milk. Two rebel officers were sitting there and made him prisoner. Two of the engineers of the boat with a man from the deck had followed the steward and they came up just as the steward was captured. One of the rebel officers stepped out on the piazza, with a pistol in each hand, and called to the three men to surrender. They had been careless in leaving the boat without arms, and one of the engineers gave up, while the other engineer and man made their escape, the prisoners were robbed, one of his watch, and the other of some small articles, and their captors started to march with them into the swamps. As soon as information was received on board the Huntress negotiations were opened to release them, but we could only get them back as prisoners on parole, and they so remained for months thereafter.

August 13, 1865, the war being over the several vessels of the squadron were put out of commission,

and after fourteen months' service on the Mississippi river, extending from St. Louis on the north to Vicksburg on the south, I came home.

History has been defined by a distinguished writer as the relation of a few incidents of a personal nature connected with some place or country. I have in the foregoing reminiscences endeavored to relate such incidents in connection with my services on board a gunboat as would go to show what a state of war brings upon the people ; to elucidate the character of the people of the section of country where I served, with some information regarding the country itself.

As a suitable ending to these Reminiscences I give the following little "Ode," written by my friend, Morris M. Berry, esq., who served a few months on the Huntress with me :

*ODE.*

TO THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

Father of waters ! muddy theme  
Of song at any time,  
Just quit your digging in that bluff,  
And listen to my rhyme.

You have the curve of beauty, Dad,  
And all its twists display,  
And sprawl along your crumbling banks,  
As though you'd lost your way.

Your turbid waters, darkling, hide  
Their depths from mortal sight,  
Perhaps, concealing mysteries  
Too dreadful for the light.

That fabled myth of olden time,  
Where souls were rowed to hell,  
Was scarce more murky than the waves  
That in thy current swell.

And yet I've sometimes seen thee laugh,  
And mend thy lagging pace,  
When moonbeams falling, danced upon,  
And tickled thy old face.

Perhaps, when zephyrs fan the air,  
And tint thy shores with green,  
Thy grisly visage will relax,  
And smile upon the scene.

'Tis winter now, and nothing blooms  
But wizard mistletoe—  
No warblers sing—Your only birds  
The buzzard, gull and crow.

No flowers are budding on your shores,  
No fragrance scents the air,  
No leaflet flutters in the breeze,  
Your cotton-trees are bare.

Father of streams ! Grand-dad of muds !  
Don't wash yourself away,  
Then I may come in June again  
And sing another lay,

But, if you like my rhyme, old Dad,  
And have a spark of grace,  
Go to the Gulf of Mexico  
And wash your dirty face.

M. M. B

*U. S. S. Huntress, Miss. Squadron, February, 1865.*



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